

Cough and Cold Medications for Children

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC - safer, healthier people.

[Shelly Diaz] Hi. I'm Shelly Diaz from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Today I'm here with Dr. Melissa Schaefer. Dr. Schaefer is an epidemiologist with CDC's Division of Health Care Quality Promotion. Dr. Schaefer just co-authored a report on pediatric emergency room visits due to cough and cold medicine. Dr. Schaefer, tell us all about the report. What were your findings?

[Dr. Melissa Schaefer] Well Shelly, we found that just over 7,000 children are presenting to emergency departments each year from cough and cold medications, and the majority of these visits are due to children accessing these medications without adult supervision.

[Shelly Diaz] Dr. Schaefer, of that 7,000, how many kids did get into the medicine without their parents' knowledge?

[Dr. Melissa Schaefer] Just over 4,000, about 4,600 kids, got into the medications without their parents knowing about it.

[Shelly Diaz] Well, are children able to get past that childproof packaging?

[Dr. Melissa Schaefer] Well, childproof packaging has been in place for a number of years and has definitely cut down on the number of children accessing these medications without their parents knowing, but our numbers show that children are still finding a way to get into these medications.

[Shelly Diaz] Were younger children more likely than older children to take the medicine without their parents' knowledge?

[Dr. Melissa Schaefer] The main age group of children that were affected were children two to five-year-olds, which was expected because those are the more notoriously curious group that gets into trouble.

[Shelly Diaz] Dr. Schaefer, this sounds like a problem, and it sounds like most of these injuries were preventable. What can parents do to keep their children safe and to keep them from taking these medications?

[Dr. Melissa Schaefer] Well, in the short term, parents should be reminded to keep all medications, not just cough and cold medications, out of the hands of their children. So secured in cupboards or cabinets where their kids can't access them. They should also not tell children that medication is candy and they should avoid taking their own medications in front of their children.

And in the long term, we think that improvements on packaging can help prevent children from getting into these medications without an adult around.

[Shelly Diaz] Thank you, Dr. Schaefer, for providing this information. It will surely help parents prevent injuries due to cough and cold medication.

For more information on this subject, you can visit CDC's web site at www.cdc.gov and search under poison prevention.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family, and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.